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INSTRUMENTS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ABORTION SOLD IN THE MARKET PLACES OF PARIS.

BY

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NEW YORK.

Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine.

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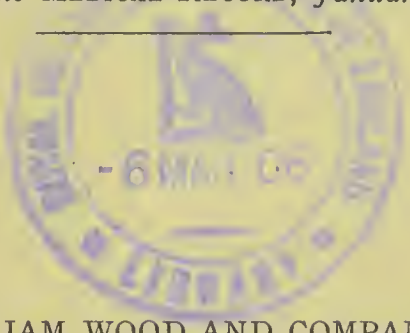
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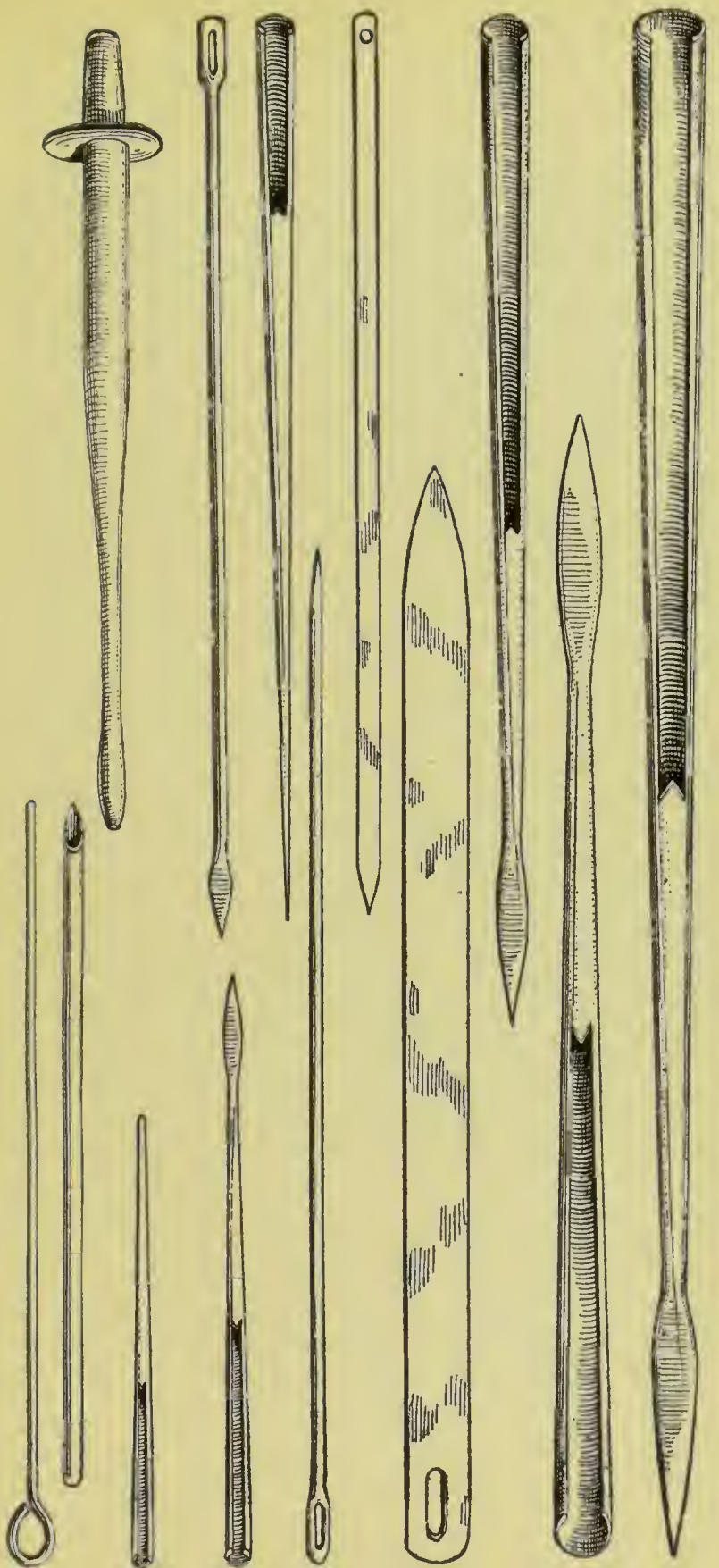
In the beginning I will say in defence of myself, that at all times I am on the lookout to learn whatsoever I can from the powers of others. Driven by this desire—or curiosity, if you please to so call it—I have endeavored to meet all comers, and with a result that I have, upon a number of occasions, secured to a varying degree the confidence of individuals whose occupations in life were neither ethical nor legal.

One day in September I strolled through the Boulevard Quinet, interested in the uproar of a transient street market, one of the features of Paris as in many of the cities elsewhere upon the Continent. This market was peculiar in that both buyers and sellers were almost without exception women, and the excitement and turmoil presented beggars description. Passing in and out through the crowds (the aggregate numbers of which may be guessed when I tell of twenty women counted who were far advanced in pregnancy), I at length came upon a shrewd-looking female of thirty-two or thereabouts with a child clinging to her skirts, and who, while seemingly with nothing to sell, was most energetically calling in shrill-toned voice what I translated, "For the ladies," "For the ladies." Attracted, I stood to one side, allowing the woman to pass me while seeking an explanation. She eyed me sharply as she

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came up, but, rightly judging my presence, continued her calls until well past my stand, when she suddenly ceased and began to bargain at one of the booths. Looking about I learned the cause for the interruption in the person of a policeman on duty. When the officer had passed beyond carshot, her cries began anew, and spying a prospective customer in a matron who had paused in the midst of her sundry purchases, flashed before the other's eyes a handful of instruments similar to some in my collection. Accompanying the exposure with rapid explanations as to proper use and praises of the effectiveness of the several varieties. A bargain was soon struck, the purchaser, selecting an instrument to her liking, paid the price asked, namely, ten centimes, equal in our money to two cents, carefully secreted the implement near the bottom of her basket and quickly lost herself to view. A little further along another sale was made. I then addressed the peddler, asking her to show me her stock, as I desired to purchase. She refused at first, but later, crediting my statements, allowed me to choose from her supply, which was cunningly concealed in an inside pocket beneath her apron. Selecting an average-sized and shaped implement, I paid her the usual fee of two sous, which is two cents. Returning by that way upon another market day, I determined to secure a complete collection, and though I sought patiently I was unable to find her. Later the cause became apparent when a raid upon the many unlicensed peddlers about the place was made by some detectives who came upon the scene from various side streets. It was not until two weeks later that she dared to return. With little persuasion I was then enabled to secure one of each of the several varieties of instruments which she carried, and, though very explicit in explaining the use of them, refused absolutely to tell me where she obtained the implements she sold. Viewed mechan-



ically, it will be seen that the various specimens are well made, being of hammered steel save for one exception, filed and well finished, lacking but a nickel plating to compare very favorably with the products of a surgical instrument shop. The general directions given to a purchaser are that the instrument may be used at any time during the course of gestation. The operator and patient being combined in the same individual, for it is recommended that a woman can best perform the operation unassisted and verily I believe that the average French woman can locate her uterine os as certainly as she can touch the tip of her nose. To facilitate the location of the mouth of the uterus pressure is to be made over the lower abdomen by means of the unoccupied hand. When found, the os is to be gradually dilated by a rotary onward motion of the instrument until the sensation of rupture occurs and the escape of bloody fluid proves the success of the first stage of the operation. If not immediately successful, syringing is to be commenced. Hot water intrauterine irrigations quickly complete the operation with little or no apparent after-effects in the majority of instances. When general sepsis occurs the woman is early trundled off to a hospital. The French laity probably understand better than any other people the best method of interrupting pregnancy. The flat, curved instrument I obtained some time later from another of these itinerant vendors, in a portion of the city far removed from the first. This instrument was especially recommended to fulfil any indication. Some of the specimens seem, upon a closer inspection, to be not at all unsuitable for the purpose for which they were designed. The spear-head variety partakes of the nature of a dilating forceps as well as being a membrane-puncturing instrument and looks not unlike one of the forms of perforator used by obstetri-

cians. Shown to a number of public women they one and all expressed wonderment at my possessing the instrument, but readily demonstrated to my satisfaction that they thoroughly understood its use. None of the French physicians or surgeons about the several hospitals which I visited and to whom I presented the matter had ever seen the instruments; neither at the Maison St. Lazare or detention hospital for the public women of Paris were they recognized, yet all knew of their existence. Mr. Abuthnot Lane of Guy's Hospital in London was extremely interested in the collection, he having spent much time in Paris and in study upon the social questions relating to matters upon this subject. He further expressed the opinion that no English woman would have sense enough to know how to employ the instruments for their set purpose.

The bone irrigator tip was added to the collection as being one of the commonest kinds and sold for one franc, twenty-five centimes, or twenty five cents, at all druggists, many hair dressers, milliners, stationers, grocers, and tobacco shops. The irrigation habit is so strongly engrafted upon both males and females in France that a hotel bedroom is considered incomplete without one of the irrigation tubs which look not unlike a baby's bath-tub with bent in sides placed upon short legs upon which the individual sits astride when using it.

49 East Sixty-fourth Street.

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